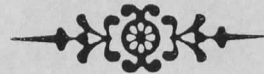


instituted, and the circulation climbed steadily. The Library Board was ably lead by Robert Van Slyke, who succeeded Mr. Panebaker. He handed the reigns over to Edith Rothblatt, who served as Board President for more than 10 years. Current Board members are Rita Gross (president), Joann Van Slyke, Phil Cook, Eugene Levich, and Geraldine Wiley, and the current Librarian is Meike Cryan.

After one hundred years the Library has grown from its humble beginnings with 1200 books and daily circulation of 15 volumes to holdings of approximately 22,000 items and an annual circulation of more than 40,000 items. The Library also maintains a good general reference collection appropriate for its size and readership, and provides the very popular books-on-tape and large-print titles. Story hours for pre-schoolers offer young children opportunities for socialization and an introduction to the world of books and reading. In the summer months, many children join the Library's Summer Reading Club for fun and learning during the long school hiatus.

Membership in the Ramapo Catskill Library System (RCLS) enables the Library to borrow books and materials of all types from libraries throughout the State and the country, to offer a revolving collection of feature films and children's classics on video, and to permit our borrowers to take advantage of the resources of all area public libraries via "Direct Access" privileges. RCLS Consultants are available to keep the Library up-to-date on developments in the library field beyond Sullivan County.

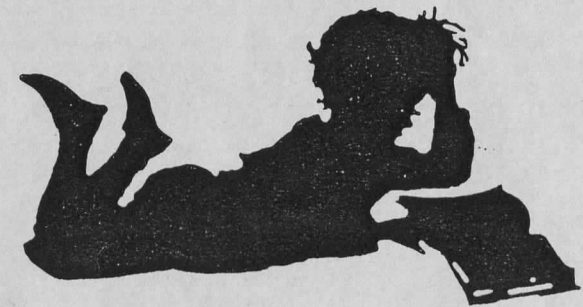
As the Library is heading toward the twenty-first century, State standards will require longer opening hours and participation in the "Electronic Super Highway." The Liberty Public Library has begun this process by adding computerized reference services (Infotrac) and a FAX machine. A computerized circulation system and on-line catalog connected to the RCLS database are part of the plan for the future. We hope that the residents of the Liberty School District, which the Library is chartered to serve, will continue to provide the Library with their strong support to keep it an important and vital part of the life of the community.



**BOOKS**  
say it all

# **LIBERTY PUBLIC LIBRARY**

## **THE FIRST HUNDRED YEARS 1894 - 1994**



**NORTH MAIN STREET  
LIBERTY, N. Y. 12754**

ONE HUNDRED YEARS ago, on July 2, 1894, the Liberty Public Library opened its doors to the public with a total of 1200 books. The elected trustees of the new Library were the Rev. G. T. Galbraith, Mrs. J. C. Young, A. W. Abrams, Dr. C. S. Payne, and Miss Ada Ernhout.

Board of Education minutes from March 17, 1894, reported the establishment of the Free Public Library and added the proviso that "the books are to be kept in the school building, and one of the teachers will act as librarian during the school year. The library must be kept open at least three days of the week for one hour each day. It is subject to inspection by an officer of the Regents, and annual reports will be demanded." - (And we are still submitting those annual reports to the State!)

A report for the first six months of operation lists Nettie A. Ward as Librarian with a salary for this time of \$27.00. During this period, the Library attracted 206 readers and daily circulation was about 15 volumes.

When the Union Free School House, located where the present day bus parking lot is, became cramped for space in about 1910, the Public Library moved to the Hoos building on School Street, just behind Thompson's drug store. This saved it from becoming a victim of the fire that consumed the school building in 1911.

In September of 1912, when school began in the new brick building on North Main Street, the library was trundled back to the school basement, where it remained until its space was needed again for the expanding school population.

During this time it appears that the community in general seems to have ignored the Public Library and hardly any mention of it is to be found in the local newspapers. It is quite possible that the influx of TB patients in the area made people fearful of handling and sharing books lest they contract the disease in this manner. All this time the Library was run by Paris-born Mrs. Marguerite Lambert, who was the librarian from 1927 until her death in 1953.

By late 1931, letters and articles began to appear in the local papers urging that the Public Library be revitalized. It was still in the school basement and open only four and a half hours a week. Nevertheless, 532 people borrowed 6,265 books in 1931.

By April of 1932 a new voice was being heard, that of David Panebaker, the new school principal. He

indicated that the school would soon be needing the space occupied by the library and that the opening hours did not remotely conform with the State requirements of 18 hours per week. People apparently listened, for soon after a card party was held at the old Lenape Hotel for the benefit of the Library. Three hundred people attended and raised \$136.00 about half of the annual budget of the Library. By August of 1933, one hundred and six new borrowers had been registered, and a new Library Board had brought greater interest to the Library.

True to Mr. Panebaker's warnings, the school needed the space, and in the middle 1930's the library moved to the old wooden village building on North Main Street. It remained there for several years until the State found the building a firetrap and unsafe for the prisoners in the jail, which was part of the village hall. After yet another stay in the school building, the Library moved to the second story of the new brick Municipal Building in 1938. This was to be its home for more than a quarter of the century. Enthusiastic directors and an exceptionally good Board President, David E. Panebaker, were to see the Library expand and develop during this period.

Following the death of Mrs. Lambert, Arlie Hartman took over as Librarian and did a splendid job. It was during her tenure that the Library made its final move to its present quarters.

The new library building, situated on the Elementary School lawn, was made possible by the generosity of Jacob and Edith Hill Beck. Mr. and Mrs. Beck were longtime residents of the community and lived in the house across the street which Mrs. Beck had inherited from her parents. They wished to leave a memorial that all the Village could benefit from, and so, in 1955, they gave the Library \$100,000.00 to construct the new building.

On April 13, 1966, at 4 p.m., the opening ceremonies for the new Jacob and Edith Beck Library building were held, with Mrs. Beck cutting the ribbon. Speakers at the ceremony were Robert Van Slyke, Chairman of the Building Committee, Mayor Harold Schue and David E. Panebaker, whose name had been associated with the Library for more than thirty years. Mr. Panebaker was a trustee of the Library for 32 years and served as its President for 20 of those years.

Arlie Hartman guided the affairs of the Library until her death in 1973 when Betty Ihlo-Morgenstern took over that position. Ms. Ihlo-Morgenstern introduced many innovative programming ideas to the Library with annual Halloween parties, fiddle concerts, dramatic readings, and monthly film programs. Under her leadership regular evening hours were added year round, telephone reference service was